

# Optimising Service-Learning in Responding to COVID-19 Complexities in Under-Resourced and Contextual Deprived Public Schools

Gregory Alexander

Central University of Technology, Bloemfontein and South Africa

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## ABSTRACT

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The global educational systems were significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly public schools in South Africa that faced challenging conditions. In South Africa, nearly 17 million students were impacted by the different lockdown phases imposed by the government to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus (Landa, Zhou & Marongwe 2021). In 2020, about 60% of school days in the early grades were lost due to COVID-19, which exacerbated learning inequalities and reduced grade repetition rates (Ardington, Wills & Kotze, 2021; Wills & van der Berg, 2024). In response to the extensive difficulties and threats encountered by these public schools, a group of BEd Honours students (who are in-service teachers) enrolled in the course EDP40AB (Psychology of Education) at a University of Technology in South Africa, were assigned to implement a small-scale Service-Learning intervention at their respective institutions. Service-learning, which serves as a structured and credit-bearing educational experience or form of assessment (as demonstrated in this study), provided opportunities for in-service teachers and stakeholders to engage in organised initiatives aimed at alleviating the difficulties faced by under-resourced and contextual deprived public schools. In this context, students were required to perform a literature review on the global impact of COVID-19 on education, including teaching, learning, and assessment, as well as conduct a SWOT analysis and investigate the experiences of five educators during the pandemic.

JEL Codes:

**Keywords:** *Service-learning, COVID 19, Contextual deprived schools*